

THE MINUTES OF THE WARRANT COMMITTEE MEETING March 06, 2002

Chairman Brusch called the meeting to order at 7:38 PM.

Member absent: Lawrence McCormick Also present: Selectman William Brownsberger, Selectman Anne Marie Mahoney, Assistant to the Town Administrator Joyce Munro, and Chairman of the Town Hall Building Complex Committee Joel Mooney.

FY2003 Budget Discussion

Chairman Brusch thanked the committee for their reduction ideas for the FY03 budget. Discussion on several ideas:

1. Member Clark offered the idea of building the new Town Library on the High School grounds and use that as both the Belmont High School Library and the Town Library. Several members expressed pros and cons regarding this matter.
 - o Pros:
 - Making the Town Library good enough for everyone and using the space in the High School for something else.
 - Location is great since it is just across the street from the current library.
 - The Town Library is open more time during the day and weekends for availability of research.
 - Member Curtis discussed technology budget of the Schools. If the Town library is more richly endowed than the Schools, then the burden could shift to the Town and the Schools could focus more on the technology aspect of the research area.
 - Member Clark observed the new library 1) might may not be so space constrained, 2) a new library could be built while the old library is being used, and 3) the existing main library site would be available for all to use (three alternate uses: more field playing space, fire station, senior center).
 - o Cons:
 - Legality and question of authority with using School Department land.
 - The High School would need an area for free/meeting space on projects, study sessions, etc.
 - The actual location is not very specific regarding the open field area. Maybe take Cambridge plating by eminent domain and put the library there?
 - The idea had been brought up before and shot down about 10 years ago.
2. *Establishing a Public Works Department*

Discussion commenced on creating one source billing in which BMLD could do all the billing. Cemetery staff does do plowing as does Highway, but it's pretty hard to fold them in as a function of the Highway Department. Selectman Monahan mentioned there was some analysis on this topic 10 or 12 years ago or so. Member Flewelling urged the Committee not to impinge on BMLD since it is a profit-seeking entity. Selectman Monahan clarified that they would be doing the

Water Department billing. It is being currently discussed by those entities, but there is not full cooperation by both parties.

3. *Human Resources for School & Town Functions*

Chairman Brusch talked for School Committee Member Ralph Jones who thinks Town and Schools should be outsourcing all of the Human Resource functions. Member Miller mentioned Karen Pressey (School Human Resource Manager) is retiring. If consolidation is to do with excess capacity, there is no excess capacity in the School's HR Department. Member Miller says Mr. Jones has mentioned outsourcing at other School Committee meetings, and she would like to see some information and research on that topic. Member Morley questioned if two high level positions are needed (Town HR and School HR Directors) or if the Town needs one Director and a number of administrative personnel below them. Outsourcing can end up costing you more. Chairman Brusch commended the role Dr. Pressey performs with the Schools.

4. *Placing the Recreation Department under the Schools*

This is School Superintendent Dr. Peter Holland's idea which Member Miller spoke on. For use of space and scheduling, it may be something that can coordinate together. There may currently be some duplication of effort. Member Freiner agreed it may fall under the umbrella of the Schools taking care of all the after school activities. Another member asked if the Recreation programs should become a profit making area for the Town.

Member Curtis stated the Committee needs to look and see if we are actually going to save any money on this issue, which is true for all of these ideas. Member Hilgenberg cautioned the Committee of the different unions even within those departments such as Buildings and Grounds of the Town and Schools.

Member Schafer questioned the Recreation Department doing programs for Seniors as well as the Council On Aging. It may be not so much a savings, but a coordination that could occur. There seems to be a friction that is between the two. Member Hilgenberg informed the Committee that Senior programs and SPORT programs are subsidized by the Town. So there might be some reconfiguration that can be done.

5. *Consolidate Youth Department with the Recreation Department*

Selectman Monahan talked of the Selectmen attending a meeting of the Youth Commission recently. Their goals are totally different and diverse from the Recreation and School departments. The Youth Commission is an untapped entity. Chairman Brusch reminded the Committee that the purpose of consolidating is not necessary eliminating programs departments.

6. *Establish a floating clerical position that can be used in each of the general government units during peak periods to eliminate the need for units to staff for the peak times.*

Member Morley noticed that paper and supplies can only be cut so much, and then staffing becomes an issue. She gave the example of the Town Clerk's Office in which there is a Town Clerk, an Assistant Town Clerk and only one staff level person. Member Curtis noted this is a savings about the here and now without a

need for a study on this. Chairman Brusch shared her frustration on Assistant Department Heads getting time and a half to go to night or Saturday meetings. Member Heigham noted there might be some legal reasons for an Assistant Town Clerk and possibly Assistant Town Treasurer. Member Curtis suggested the Committee have Legal Counsel look at the Fair Labor Standards Act and see who falls into that jurisdiction. Chairman Brusch agreed that we may not be able to do anything about it now, but futuristically we may be able to change those positions. Mel Kleckner told the Committee about the Town's attempts to get the Assistant Department Head positions out of the unions but to no avail. Member Schafer questioned about the hours in the day. For example, if there is a night meeting, then the Assistant Department Head could possibly shift their hours for the day. Mr. Kleckner informed the Committee that the Board of Selectmen met last Saturday morning with the School Committee and then about the budget. They decided to concentrate on expenditures. They went through things that were being eliminated from the reduced service budget, and flagged what could not be reduced.

Mr. Kleckner reviewed two Budget spreadsheets regarding possible Revenues and Expenditures scenarios. A copy of each is on file with the Clerk. Most of the Revenue adjustments are not one-time, except for the Alewife Development Payment. The \$100K for Capital Endowment Fund is interest of which there was none projected until now. Chairman Brusch inquired of the Board of Selectmen of when they would be discussing the "Pay-as-You-Throw" suggestion. Selectman Monahan said the Board of Selectmen have not officially discussed, but he does not think it can happen for FY03. Selectman Brownsberger would like it implemented by January 1, 2003. More discussion is needed between the Selectmen and the Highway Department.

Member Flewelling stated the McLean decision could be coming forthwith, and questioned if that could increase the revenue projections for FY03. Selectman Monahan said it could influence the Building Permit Fees revenues.

Members discussed the spreadsheet citing specific examples within the exercise in order to understand the spreadsheet. Selectman Brownsberger added that what is not reflected in this spreadsheet is about \$500K cut from the Capital Budget as well as another \$500K to \$1M on the table for the School Department. Member Miller discussed some of the cuts proposed by the School Administration along with revenue enhancements for FY03 that will be voted on March 26th.

Member Clark asked about a possible alternative to get through this year if the debt exclusion does not pass, and the Committee briefly questioned the possibility of borrowing which Chairman Brusch said the Committee would discuss further at another meeting.

"Plan B" for the Annex Art

Herron as part of the Committee to Support the Debt Exclusion has requested the Warrant Committee take a vote on supporting the debt exclusion. Since the Committee has not had a chance to discuss this topic very much, Chairman Brusch recommended the vote take place at the next meeting on March 13, 2002.

Mr. Kleckner informed the Committee a petition has been filed by 10 registered voters to take the Town Hall Annex building out of the Historic District.

Chairman Brusch asked the Committee, "What is the 'Plan B' option for the Annex if the debt exclusion fails?" Member Clark remembered the feasibility study showed the costs of either building would be about the same, outside of future operating costs.

Mr. Mooney explained the operating costs for the current buildings (Town Hall Annex and School Administration Building) were very confusing and jumbled. To pull out the real operating cost of a building would be extremely difficult. He projected about 1/3 to 40% more costs if you were to design a very efficient building rather than renovating two buildings. However, then everyone would be in one functioning building in lieu of the two. Mr. Mooney reported FY2001 actual costs for operations (electricity, fuel, and maintenance repair) for the School Administration Building were \$22,237, with combined total operating costs of the Admin. Building and the Annex of about \$100K. Approximately \$500K from what is available now can get the Town construction documents on schedule. What is still needed is a schematic design costing \$140K and some design development is another \$140K. Chairman Brusch pointed out the budget for this part of the project is around \$274K, cutting it very close to those costs.

The Committee discussed a variety of "Plan B" Ideas:

1. Take the Annex out of the Historic District and build a new building. Sell the School Administration Building.
2. A 2nd debt exclusion in September.
3. Take the \$4.5 million in Kendall insurance money and use the McLean tax capacity to borrow the remaining \$7 million.
 - o Ask for the \$7 million as a debt exclusion.
4. Take the design money out of the operating budget for FY03 (\$500K - \$800K).
5. Fund all of the Town Hall Complex from the operating budget and go for a series of operating overrides.
6. Use the McLean Tax Capacity in FY03 to fund the design and in future years, commit it to pay down Town Hall Complex debt.
7. A stepped plan.
 - o ½ half: go ahead and try to get Town Meeting to let us borrow the money for the design
 - o 2nd ½: several different ways to fund the remaining money (overrides, debt exclusions, McLean Tax Capacity, etc.).

Member White questioned whether the above alternatives of financing would still be available if the resolution passes at Town Meeting to take the building out of the Historic District. Selectman Monahan presumed that they all would be available.

Member White clarified the Warrant Committee debt exclusion vote is regarding what is best for the Town financially. Member Clark clarified that it is not whether you are spending the least amount of money for a project, but "weighing bang against the buck."

Mr. Mooney noted the Annex project does not have the same constituency as other Town projects. He feels that for the Town to move ahead on all these issues, the right thing to do is to move ahead on this project. Not doing it will result in implications relating to court, other projects, and the Town.

Member Heigham made a motion, and it was unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 10:22 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Kristina E. Frizzell
Interim Recording Clerk